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JEANNE LONG
CONGRESSIONAL INF SVC.
4520 EAST-WEST HWY.
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FOOD ENGINEERING

ABOUT THE COVER

Although stalled by a recent string of failures, efforts by U.S. food companies to provide the table with fresh refrigerated foods are being renewed—this time by smaller companies seeking to avoid past mistakes.
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ENGINEERED FOODS

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JESSE H. NEAL AWARD-WINNING EDITORS

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Kessler blasts lackey concept of FDA ...

During his keynote address at the annual meeting of the Institute of Food Technologists (IFT) in New Orleans on June 20, David Kessler, commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) totally denied any insinuation that the FDA policy towards biotechnology makes the agency a lackey for the food industry.

He was referring to the FDA's recently announced policy that grants automatic approval of biotechnologically-produced foods that result in substances that already have been approved. Only substances that lack a history of safe use will be required to undergo the usual approval process. Kessler also addressed food allergies: "We specify that, if genetic material is transferred from a food source that is known to be commonly allergenic, the developer has two choices: either prove that the allergenic property has not been transferred or label the new food to alert consumers to its potential allergenicity." *(Continued on page 13.)*

Consumers Give "Thumbs Up" to Biotech

Consumer Response	Favorable	Very Favorable
Expressing their impression of biotech—before discussion	70%	10%
Expressing their impression of biotech—after discussion	78	15
View of biotechnology to increase milk production		70
View of biotechnology to produce lower-fat meat		91

Source: Institute of Food Technologists.

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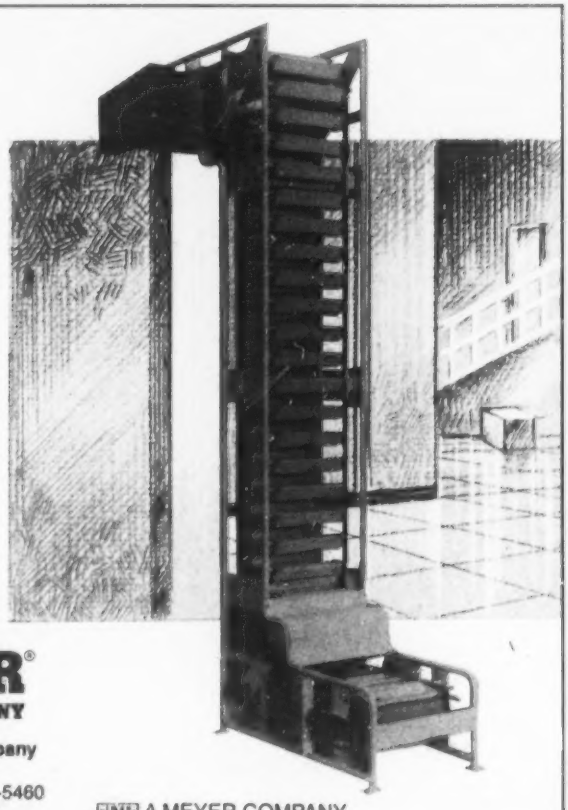

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... while reviewing FDA policies ...

FDA is still formulating policy regarding whether vegetarians should be alerted when a food crop contains a trait derived from an animal source or how information should be provided to people with special religious dietary constraints.

Stuart Pape, attorney at the Washington, DC law firm of Patton, Boggs & Blow, told FE that he ***foresees "more Balkanization"*** *of biotechnology regulations as states react to the newly announced FDA policy regarding biotechnologically-produced foods. This could quite possibly result in Congressional hearings and federal legislation regarding biotechnology, he added. Pape spoke at a breakfast hosted by Hazelton at the IFT annual meeting in New Orleans.*

... and praising NLEA as a "shot in the arm"

Kessler also praised the Nutrition Labeling and Education Act (NLEA) as being a "pro-information statute" that will ***give industry an incentive to develop nutritionally improved foods.*** *Kessler indicated that the FDA will give industry room to cut fat in traditionally high fat foods, such as sour cream, and use descriptors such as low-fat sour cream. He also outlined planned changes at the agency that would* ***delegate decision making further down*** *the organizational chart. Also, the National Center for Toxicological Research (NCTR) is negotiating to develop an improved bioassay program to reduce the uncertainty in risk assessment for certain chemicals. The FDA is also considering forming a Science Board comprising eight or ten of the nation's top scientists to advise the agency.*

A ***Food Advisory Committee*** *that will also provide advice to the FDA is being assembled, with four out of 24 seats reserved for industry (and an additional four seats for consumer representatives.)*

Responding to a question from FE, Kessler said the agency has recommended instituting ***a nine month extension*** *to the May 1993 effective date of the NLEA (pushing it back to February 1994). Stuart Pape (see above story) said substantial changes will be made to the NLEA as a result of comments received by the FDA.*

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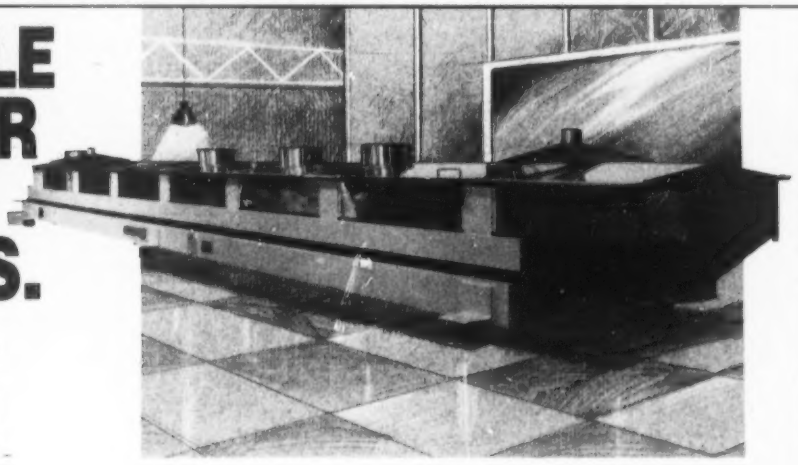

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